

around the stalks just below the heads and tying it. This enables her later to gather a large harvest with less trouble, the sheaf being handled more easily and more securely than the loose stalks, and less grain is knocked into the water in the handling. The sheaves stand in rows just far enough apart to allow a canoe to pass between the rows.⁵ After allowing them to stand about two weeks, the grain then being ripe, the women return in their canoes and harvest the crop. Formerly the heads were sometimes cut off with a knife and carried to the shore, but this could not be done to advantage when the seeds were ripe.

Some of the Indians, instead of using the twine, would formerly gather a handful of stalks and twist them together and downward, leaving the grain thus to ripen; they proceeded in this manner over a considerable district.⁶ When they came later to gather the seed, each woman knew her own by some peculiarity of the twist, and the rights of this ownership were respected. Carver says that each family had its allotment and was able to distinguish it by the manner in which the sheaves were fastened.⁷

Father Marquette probably referred to this practice when he wrote: "They divide the ground whereon this wild rice grows, so that each one can reap his own separately without trespassing on his neighbor's patch."⁸

Sometimes the rice is harvested without the preliminary binding into sheaves. Two women work together sitting in the extremes of a canoe facing each other. The one at the rear is equipped with a long, light pole with which to push the canoe along, this pole being sometimes forked at one end to keep it from sinking too far in the muddy bottom of the stream. The woman at the bow holds two slender cedar sticks a trifle more than three feet in length. These sticks are 1½ inches in diameter at the butt and taper almost to a point. They are specially prepared for this purpose and are used for none other. One of them is sometimes made with a curve or hook at one end. As the canoe is slowly pushed through the thickly grown stalks of rice, this woman bends the stalks over the canoe from one side with her curved stick and strikes the heads smartly with the

⁵ Rev. C. Verwyst, O. S. F., in a personal letter.

⁶ A. G. Ellis. *Recollections*, in Wis. Hist. Coll., vol. VII, p. 265.

⁷ J. Carver. *Travels*, Phila. ed., 1784, p. 210.

⁸ *Relations des Jésuites*, 1671. Québec ed., 1858, p. 39.